

John Wendell Barrett House
72 Main Street
Nantucket
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-915

HABS
MASS
10-NANT
36-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

JOHN WENDELL BARRETT HOUSE
also known as "Wallace Hall"HABS
MASS
10-NANT
36-

Location: 72 Main Street (on south side), Nantucket,
Massachusetts

Present Owner: Harriet L. Terry (Mrs. Herbert I. Terry)

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Terry

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement
of Significance: An example of the work of John Coleman, Nantucket
builder and craftsman, and of the Greek Revival
style in an early, conservative phase on Nantucket.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1820 -- John Wendell Barrett.
- 1866 -- Sarah M. Hallett; William M. Barrett and Eliza T.
Bovey, children of John W. Barrett.
- 1867 -- Sarah M. Hallett purchased from brother and sister.
- 1887 -- Frederick G. Hallett, and Sarah E. Mildram,
children of Sarah M. Hallett.
- 1895 -- Edith Hall Freeland.
- 1901 -- George S. Griscom.
- 1911 -- Jouett Lee Wallace (Mrs. William Wallace).
- 1957 -- Nantucket Historical Trust.
- 1959 to date -- Harriet L. Terry (Mrs. Herbert I. Terry)

2. Date of erection: 1820 (Abstract, Records in Registry of
Deeds, Town of Nantucket, Massachusetts)3. Architect: Probably none. The builder is believed to have
been an artisan named John Coleman, and although he was not
a trained architect, many houses built in the 1820's and
30's attest to his skill. He was the person on Nantucket
who achieved the greatest renown for his ability to use
wood in producing houses with neo-classic details. (Abstract,
A Mirror of Nantucket by George Allen Fowlkes).4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No plans known. The
house is an example of the conservative yet comparatively
elaborate type of architecture of the wealthy merchants
after the War of 1812.

The distinctive feature on any house built by Coleman is the portico in front of the doorway. Coleman always placed a solid or pierced type of balustrade on top of the entablature.

The house is symmetrically balanced. With the exception of the cut-stone stoop and the high brick basement, the rest of the house is constructed of wood, and shows the skill and quality of work which the conservative ship-builder-carpenter-contractor-architects on Nantucket were able to achieve. Clapboards are used on all sides. The details on the house are so finely executed that the transition from masonry work, as shown in the English pattern books, to a working of these same details in wood has been achieved. (Abstract, A Mirror of Nantucket by Fowlkes).

The front porch with two pairs of Ionic columns is the dominant feature of the facade. The large cupola, a development of the "walk" on the earlier houses has Greek Revival decorative details.

The wide hall, running from front to rear through the center of the house, is lighted by sidelights and a transom with leaded panes of glass around the front door. The stair has a newel post of brass in the center of the handrail volute. The molded interior frames with ornamented corners is typical of the Greek Revival period. In the west front parlor is a black marble mantel, while the mantel in the west rear parlor is of the same design but is executed on wood and painted white. Large plaster rosettes are in the center of the ceilings. (Abstract, Old Houses on Nantucket by Kenneth Duprey).

6. Notes on alterations and additions: Little change has been made to the exterior of the house. The interior has been modernized only where necessary. The kitchen is particularly interesting as restored by Mrs. Terry.

When Mr. Barrett built the house there were three other houses on the premises where the lawn and gardens now are located. Two of these were purchased and removed by him and a third bought and torn down in 1905 by Mr. Griscom, owner at that time of 72 Main Street.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The first owner of the house, John Wendell Barrett, was a successful Nantucket merchant and was for many years associated with George T. Baker, merchants and co-partners under the firm name of Baker and Barrett. These men had a great many dealings in Nantucket real estate, buying and selling various properties. Mr. Barrett was President of the Pacific National Bank from 1848 to 1866. He died, a widower, in 1866 of typhoid fever, at the age of 73, and at that time his estate was valued at \$255,039.41.

In the Great Fire of 1846 the house was saved because Mrs. John W. Barrett would not allow the firewards to blow up the house in an effort to check the flames. She told them that if they blew up the house, they would have to blow her up with it. Fortunately the wind veered shortly thereafter, saving the house.

The house is mentioned in many histories of Nantucket. Henry Barnard Worth in Nantucket Lands and Land Owners writes that on the lot next to the John W. Barrett homestead stood the Hicksite Friends Meeting House, where formerly in 1722 had been located the blacksmith shop of Jethro Gardner.

It was during the ownership of Mrs. Wallace that the property was Land Courted and at that time became known as Wallace Hall. Her executors deeded the property to the Nantucket Historical Trust, an organization formed for the purpose, among others, of preserving fine old Nantucket buildings. They believed that this beautiful mansion was a definite asset to Main Street and should be preserved as a home and not lost to commercial enterprises. Thus, in 1959 the Trust sold the property to the Terrys.

C. Sources of Information:

Duprey, Kenneth. Old Houses on Nantucket. New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1959. (includes photographs of the interior).

Farnham, Joseph Ellis Coffee. Brief Historical Data and Memories of My Boyhood Days in Nantucket. Providence: Snow and Farnham Co., 1915. (includes photograph showing house at left).

Fowlkes, George Allen. A Mirror of Nantucket. New Jersey: Press of Interstate, 1959. (includes photograph of doorway detail).

Schweinfurth, J. A. Early Dwellings of Nantucket. White Pine series of Architectural Monographs, Vol. III. No. 6, 1917. (includes photographs).

Stevens, William Oliver. Nantucket, The Far-Away Island. New York: Dodd and Mead and Co., 1936. (drawing of doorway).

Worth, Henry Barnard. Nantucket Lands and Landowners. Nantucket Historical Association Bulletin, v. 2, no. 1-7. Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Mass., 1904-1913.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
July, 1965

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. This is part of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Ramirez, July 1971.